

Brazil Starts World's Biggest Stem Cell Research Involving 1,200 Patients

Contributed by Newsroom
Monday, 13 June 2005

Experimental medical procedures using stem cells in patients with serious heart problems have begun at three Brazilian hospitals in the South and the Northeast.

The hospitals are the National Heart Institute of Laranjeiras in Rio de Janeiro (INCL, Instituto Nacional de Cardiologia de Laranjeiras), the Heart Institute (Incor, Instituto do Coração) in São Paulo, and the Hospital Santa Isabel, in Salvador.

The effort is sponsored by the Ministry of Health and will eventually involve 33 hospitals in nine states and the Federal District, Brasília.

Altogether 1.200 volunteer patients will undergo the experimental procedures in a nationwide medical trial that will seek to ascertain the effectiveness of stem cell treatment.

The trial is presently the biggest of its kind in the world. Specific targets of the treatment are heart attack victims and people with cardiopathies, such as chronic coronary diseases, as well as Chagas disease.

This week the ministers of Health, Humberto Costa, and Science and Technology, Eduardo Campos, will visit patients undergoing stem cell treatment at the INCL. They will also sign financial contracts for further research in healthcare.

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